

# Counselling and Teaching: A Prospect

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**Abstract** - Mental Health has always been a matter of stigma in society. Any physical health issue or injury is treated with concern and immediate medical attention is sought for the same. But it is considered a shame and stigma to talk about mental health or seek help for the same. Mental health has become a matter of concern present days and it affects all irrespective of age.

Counseling has served as one of those professions that has proved its effectiveness and has been highly attached to the arena of education. Yet, despite its significance, the inculcation of the qualities of counselors in the teaching profession, importance of counseling as a teacher and the role of teacher as a counselor have been spoken at length in scarce occasions.

**Index Terms** - Mental Illness, Stigma, Counselling, Teaching.

## INTRODUCTION

The idea of fitness is sadly linked entirely to the notion of physical well-being. Whenever the word "ill" comes into play, one of the common immediate responses to the occurrence is simply wishing the person with flowers bundled with a message, "Get Well Soon". Moreover, there is an increased tendency to identify and support the patient's condition or disease simply by making the close circle of the patient aware about the complexities, problems, medications, remediations and emergency medical help to be secured for the patient in specific circumstances. However, whenever it is heard that a person is "unwell", our mind produces images of a few things some of which may be an accident, a hospitalization, or some broken part of the body in need to be operated. What is more fascinating is that the mind neglects production of images linked to its own unwell state. Hardly, do people ever think of someone being in a state of mental dilemma or mentally ill when hearing of someone being unwell. The phenomena of the human brain being unable to produce images of itself being unwell after getting a stimulus of "unwell" is just a replication of the notion of how we as human beings scathingly portray ignorance towards our mental health. Health is in fact

so rigid as a concept that we hardly ever make the effort to include mental health as one of the parameters of being "fit" or "healthy". The human brain, if not the most important, is one of the many in a system of regulated organs, which thoroughly enables the segregation of humans from other life forms on the earth as mentally well-developed, highly socially enabled and more intelligent beings.

One of the conceived meanings of mental health is that it refers to keeping the human mind healthy, however the word does not necessarily refer to the same and encompasses certain other ideas like a balance of emotions, a calm state of mind and much more. As human beings, the primary focus is more bent towards keeping the physical attributes viz. appearance, muscles, bones and skin in a healthy or pleasant condition. What goes thoroughly unnoticed is the requirement of the mind/brain to be equally fit. Physical and mental health, one must understand, are not replacements for each other, instead they go hand in hand.

An emotionally fit being is self-motivated and alive in true sense. Emotional fitness is also applicable to emotional intelligence viz. being able to handle situations well and being emotionally abled and vibrant. As said earlier, both physical and emotional health go hand in hand leading to a combined faculty of the human attributes in an individual to stand up against mental turmoil and physical ailments as well. Emotional strength has to be well enough to generate healthy coping mechanisms and show the exit window to complex conditions like depression and the plethora of features like sorrow, anxiety, negative thinking and fear that it advocates. A truly fit person should be enabled to tackle challenges in form, both physical and emotional equally.

## MENTAL HEALTH

Being mentally fit suggests the psychological well-being of an individual thus helping him/her nurture

and nourish a positive mindset towards day to day situations that arise in one's life, ultimately facilitating the individual to enjoy, cherish and uphold life as it happens. Mental fitness also nourishes the individual's self-determination eradicating negativity and narrowness. In modern days, counsellors, educators, psychiatrists and medical practitioners have rightly advocated the use of the term mental fitness in an increasing number which has in turn helped to raise awareness about the significance of mental health and the idea of "healthy" being an amalgamation of mental and physical health as a whole and not just either of the terms.

Medical help is available to patients wounded by physical health problems, in a similar fashion, one needs to acknowledge the availability of mental healthcare medical practitioners and experts in the field of psychiatry or counselling to address to mental issues.

#### MENTAL ILLNESS – A STIGMA

With mental illness gradually identifying itself as a major challenge in today's times, the target population spares no one including kids to full grown adults, sadly many of them failing to secure the help that they deserve and need to hold on to life. The disappointing part of all this undertaking is that despite all such awareness and rectification efforts for enlightenment upon mental health, potential patients and even other individuals are reluctant in accepting mental illnesses because of the caricaturized stigma attached to them. Mental health, despite the worst of stigmatization, is to be accepted as a precursor or essential entity for physical health and the equivalence of both aspects in quantifying the notion of good health. Efforts have to be made to bring forward or make individuals enabled enough to seek help in varied natures from health practitioners and/or counsellors.

The present society needs to reconsider and put under scrutiny its perceptions of mental illness or disorder. The stigma associated with mental illness has to be eradicated and education/awareness regarding such illnesses is to be popularized.

Considering the significance of mental health awareness, 10th October every year is observed as World Mental Health Day with the objective of enlightening people about the importance of mental health, throwing light upon issues concerned with

mental health and striving to make efforts to support mental health globally.

#### WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

Mental health is not a singular term or definition of any single concept, instead it encompasses holistically the aspect of personality of the individual. Both, educational institutions and education should also take up the responsibility of safeguarding the mental health of the society irrespective of gender, age or any such other criteria. Academic institutions should empower the idea that physical health as a means of promoting the moral and holistic health of the students/individuals.

There are two main factors which affect mental health of the children the most namely inferiority and insecurity. Feelings as such force the students to give up on their behaviors of taking initiatives and participation. Moreover, this also leads to a steep decline in the confidence of affected students. Pupils are to be motivated and encouraged to have enough self-confidence, belief and strength to take up initiatives and uplift their mental makeup.

Health in many ways is synonymous to the development of a nation. The World Health Organisation rightly identifies mental health as the inclusive cumulation of mental well-being, recognition of individual abilities and talents and the ability to stand up against daily stresses thus enabling significant contribution to one's own society and humanity as a whole. A more enlightening and hopeful definition of mental health is advocacy for individual well-being and smooth functioning of others around oneself.

A humongous and disheartening number of nearly 450 million people have fallen prey to mental disorders. The World Health Organisation states that about the year 2020, depression may spoil the global map by marking itself as one of the most burdensome disease. The estimate further elaborates the state of mental health's burdensomeness as so moving that even the few developed countries may find it difficult to tackle putting into question the status of the developing countries hanging to a question mark's end. There are costs to be paid, economic, social and developmental for the burden of mental health, it's treatment and care assistance. This further strengthens the idea of the

close correspondence between Mental health, physical health, development and quality of living.

#### ROADBLOCKS TO MENTAL HEALTH

Despite known causes and impact of mental diseases, there is a plethora of challenges that pose against the implementation of mental health programmes, viz.

- One of the most disappointing yet high in impact is the problem of stigmatisation of mental illnesses in the society.
- Mentally ill patients are at an increased risk of being a victim to neglect and discrimination in major areas of the society like education, employment, relationships.
- Such mentally ill patients and the impact of the conditions around them can lead to complications and may delay their own consulting of medical help.
- One of the key confusions around mental health and illnesses is that they lack definite signs or symptoms and as such may have a huge range of behavioural changes ranging from person to person.
- Diagnostic confusion leads to the idea of such illnesses being vague which in turn is a huge misconception.
- Another misconception is that the general public formulates the idea of mental illnesses around their own beliefs or perception which poses a problem too.
- For instance, the belief that people who are mentally weak or low-spirited are at the risk of mental illnesses is baseless.
- Another belief is that in contrast to physical illness, mental illness is not curable which leads to the state of therapeutic nihilism.
- People also believe that preventive measures may succeed against mental diseases which too is without proof.
- There is a disbelief in drugs used to cure mental illnesses on the basis that they cause side effects and lead to addiction.
- One misbelief is also that such drugs have no function than to merely induce sleep.
- A reliable data collection by WHO enumerates upon the prevalent gap between the availability of

resources in countries to prevent and treat mental illnesses.

- Until modern times, mental illnesses were stigmatised and alienated from other disciplines under medicine.
- The disastrous social stigma and knowledge gap among psychiatric patients and their associates leads to failure of pressure group creation and the rights of such patients.
- The area of mental illness requires a long-term commitment making it a difficult choice even for organisations that are non-governmental in nature.

#### NEED OF COUNSELLING & SKILLS REQUIRED

When we enumerate the various ways in which mental health can be effectively improved through professional help, counselling is also one of the sought modes of professional help. Being a responsible profession of clinical assistance, counselling requires an expertise in a large number of skills, good communication skills being one of them. Counsellors need to be well-versed in attentive and effective listening. A deeper knowledge about non-verbal signs and body language distinguishes the counsellor from any ordinary person, the reason being patients fallen prey to mental illnesses are more likely to communicate through words making their non-verbal attributes, gestures, postures and body language an important component of the counselling process.

Patients as such are less desirable of being thoroughly open to the counsellor. Counselling thus accommodates the questioning skill of a coach persistently questioning to bring out truth as much as possible to clarify the key happenings in the patient's life. Questioning also acts as an effective way of self-realisation for the patient helping him/her to know more about him/herself. Questioning is the client's way of making things clearer through speaking. The counsellor's reflections upon the answers further enable the patient to have the feeling of being heard and validated.

Rapport-building is another counselling skill which empowers the counsellor to be cordial with the patient. However, this skill brings its own known limits to be taken care of so as to not be cordial to the extent of being emotionally involved.

## COUNSELLING & TEACHING

In counselling, summarizing refers to summing up the major concerns of the counselling session. It highlights the major achievements and concerns that are dealt in the process. Immediacy encompasses the therapist's revelation of their reflections about the patient's responses. It helps to focus attention and establish sense of timing helping to heighten awareness. Counseling has served as one of those professions that has proved its effectiveness and has been highly attached to the arena of education. Yet, despite its significance it is qualities of counselors, importance of counseling as a teacher and the role of teacher as a counselor have been spoken at length in very few occasions.

There were times when the profession of teaching was confined to mere classroom instruction and/or bound by constraints of teaching hours and syllabi. However, over time the scope of teaching as a profession has widened to an enormous extent. Teachers these days are expected to fit into various shoes. Moreover, the professional makeup demanded from individuals as such has been raised to certain bar as teachers continue to play various roles apart from instruction and evaluation. Out of all the prominent roles that teachers are expected to play in the educational space, one of which requires a major focus upon is that of the role as a counselor.

Adding to all of these, the problems viz. emotional, psychological and social ones as in those of students have noticeably expanded over time. Moreover, the dilemma of students is visibly at an all-time high given the increase in career opportunities, familial expectations, performance pressure, teenage distractions and much more.

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## CONCLUSION

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